

Racism and the Canadian State

Daiva K. Stasiulis

Introduction

The practices and official discourse of a variety of state institutions in Canada have reflected a new level of “race consciousness” during the past five years. A notable development within the Canadian state has been the emergence at all levels of administrative and parliamentary institutions of new “race relations” and “visible minority” committees, liaison and consultative structures, programs, and commissions. Following a series of racially-motivated attacks within Toronto subways directed principally at South Asians, the Metropolitan Toronto Police and the Toronto Transit Commission jointly established a system designed to intercept attackers and prevent further incidents. A growing number of municipal councils and boards of education in Metropolitan Toronto and other major cities such as Vancouver and Ottawa have established standing committees on racism or multiculturalism (with race relation components). A Police Ethnic Relations Unit and Liaison Group on Law Enforcement and Race Relations became well-publicized adjuncts to the Metro Toronto Police Force.

At the federal level, the tenth anniversary of the Multiculturalism policy in 1981 was marked by a “national program to combat racism” supported by a \$1.7 million budget and directed by a new Race Relations Unit within the Multiculturalism Directorate. The “anti-racist” initiatives developed within the federal bureaucracy spawned the establishment of a Parliamentary Committee on Visible Minorities. The Committee conducted a series of public hearings across the country and in March of 1984 issued a report entitled “Equality Now!” It made eighty recommendations aimed at providing the “means of achieving equality of opportunity for visible minorities in Canada.”

Official concern with race relations is a departure from established Canadian political traditions. Historically, considerable resistance has existed on the part of the Canadian state to acknowledging claims

made on public resources on the basis of collective rights and “special status.”¹ Moreover, the *expansion* of race relations apparatuses is occurring during a time of cuts in social expenditures and the erosion of state welfare institutions within Canada and other liberal democracies. Finally, recent Canadian race relations policies are *not* the product of massive social disruption, but in cities such as Toronto, whose “visible minority” population has registered a six- to ten-fold increase over the course of fifteen years,² ongoing skirmishes and incidents involving racially motivated violence have occurred. Concern over years of aggressive and racist policing practices has succeeded in mobilizing minority groups such as blacks and Sikhs to ally themselves to movements calling for the democratization of the police. Alarmist media reports following the police shootings of two black men in 1978 and 1979 that “Toronto was developing into a racial powder keg” have not been borne out by the peaceful and orderly through periodically confrontational nature of campaigns over police practices, the Ku Klux Klan, and other pillars of racism.³

Although scholarly investigations of particular policies pertaining to immigration, multiculturalism, and welfare provision to ethnic groups are increasingly forming part of the social science literature, the interconnections among the various race-conscious apparatuses and policies have virtually been ignored. This article illuminates the recent politicization of race within Canadian state policy. It analyzes the relationship between two apparently unrelated areas of policy development—immigration and multiculturalism. In particular, it argues that the ameliorative, anti-racist program developed within multicultural institutions is the result of racial tensions aggravated by the coercive practices of immigration and law enforcement policies. The article concludes with a discussion of the strategies required by minority groups to successfully combat racism.

Contradictory State Policies in the Management of Race Relations

Important variations exist among the recent race-conscious state policies in the degree and the nature of responsiveness to visible minority interests. Although the recent official “race relations” discourse and programs within educational and cultural institutions represent significant gains for minority groups, other state policies and practices—notably those pertaining to immigration and law enforcement—have served to enshrine the social and political mar-

ginality of the most disadvantaged segments of visible minority communities.

The parallel development of “responsive” and “repressive” state policies, constituting the political management of race relations in Canada, corresponds to more general tendencies in the development of late capitalist states identified by theorists such as Claus Offe and Nicos Poulantzas. First, an intensification of state control over every sphere of socioeconomic life has occurred; the “factors of production”—labour, capital and land—are increasingly developed, shaped, and allocated by specific state policies.⁴ Agencies associated most directly with the management and reproduction of labour power and economic policy generally are structured in such a way as to render them relatively autonomous from elected officials and public scrutiny and are dominated by corporate management techniques and “scientific” forms of decision-making.

Second, a rapid proliferation has occurred within the state bureaucracy of institutions and programs whose role is to respond to and manage popular demands. The quality of representation is generally poor among those state agencies whose primary role is to represent and mediate conflicts and interests of subordinate or marginal classes and social forces. Such agencies occupy a lowly position in the hierarchy of state apparatuses as signified by their small and precarious budgets, their institutional dependence, limited policy influence on other agencies, and the largely symbolic nature of their terms of reference.⁵ In addition to insulating popular demands from the *real* centers of decision-making located within the executive and high levels of the bureaucracy, these state bodies show a tendency to moderate dissent and contain working class and popular movements and organizations with which they establish relations.

The process of containment occurs through a multitude of familiar practices including the closely supervised funding of dissident groups, the depoliticization of popular and costly demands, the “cooptation” of militants, and the construction of bridgeheads to unrepresentative but “responsible” spokespersons, who become effective disciplinarians of their constituencies.⁶ The prevalence of these control practices serves to undermine the image of the state’s neutrality and further what Offe has termed a “blocked mediation”⁷ between the state and popular demands and what Poulantzas calls the “growing distance between political democracy and socioeconomic democracy.”⁸

The Offe and Poulantzas formulation, though abstract and insensitive to the specificity of particular nation states, can be productive as

an analytical tool in trying to make sense of the recent processes of formulating and implementing race-related “reforms” within different institutions of the Canadian state. Many of the race relations structures, committees, and liaison bodies have placed the need for racial equality and harmony within a prominent position on their political agendas. The location of these bodies at the fringes of state power, however, have made them profoundly irrelevant to the lives and material conditions of visible minorities. Worse yet, they have sidelined and worn down the energies and resources of anti-racist minority groups bent on reform, while diverting the latter’s attention away from the real, though far less accessible, centers of decision-making over the terms of minority group economic, social, and political existence.

The following discussion examines the contradictory contributions to race relations made by two interventions of federal state institutions: *recent policy shifts in the immigration department*, and the *national program to combat racism* centered within the Multiculturalism Directorate and the Special Parliamentary Committee on Visible Minorities. The two policy developments—one primarily “repressive” and the other manifestly “responsive”—are obverse expressions of more general processes of state restructuring to sustain capital accumulation, and the legitimacy of the state itself, in a climate of ongoing economic and social deterioration.

Recent Developments in Canadian Immigration Policy and Procedures

With the onset of the current wave of stagnation in world production and trade, the efforts by Canadian firms to contend with the crisis by restructuring production processes, automating at home, and shifting labour-intensive processes overseas, have changed the volume and nature of domestic labour requirements. On a global scale, the restructuring of production has translated into a shift from *labour import* to *capital export*.⁹ Whereas the import of labour from underdeveloped countries to advanced industrialized centers characterized the long wave of capitalist expansion from 1945 to the early 1970s, a generic feature of the current period of restructuring is the export of capital to Pacific Rim and other Third World contexts where phenomenal levels of unemployment and repressive state measures serve to keep wages low.¹⁰ The development of new microprocessors, telecommunications, and transport technologies has given rise to a dizzying capacity among multinational corporations to internationalize production throughout the world. Capital flight from high-wage

economies has combined with the rationalization and automation of the work process in a wide array of manufacturing and service industries to produce a staggering level of plant closures and redundancies.¹¹

Although corroborating evidence is needed, it appears that recent visible minority immigrants in Canada have experienced the displacement effects of the crisis more extensively than other workers. In 1976, the unemployment rate for Torontonians of Indo-Pakistani mother tongue already registered twelve percent, or double the figure for "all mother tongues." The rate for Indo-Pakistani women, aged fifty-five to sixty-four, registered a whopping forty percent.¹²

The response by the federal government during the 1980s to the crisis-induced high unemployment levels among immigrants and the Canadian working population in general has predictably involved attempts to control and maintain a flexible immigrant labour force. To that end, the current immigration policy contains three related aspects: (1) a reduction in "selected worker" and overall immigration intake of the "settler" type,¹³ (2) an augmentation in the level of temporary visa workers, and (3) the establishment of a program to process and monitor illegal migrants.

As the federal government's "Background paper on future immigration levels" (November 1, 1983) makes clear, the recent and projected restrictions on immigration are part of the Canadian state's policies to mediate the effects on the domestic labour market of the restructuring of the world economy, wherein capital is shifting to low-wage countries. The Government's paper proclaims that:

The recession precipitated structural changes in the labour market which will result in the disappearance of some occupations. New production techniques and some detrimental shifts in international markets are among these indicators. At the same time, technological development and rising productivity are expected to affect both world and domestic economies; *high volume manufacturing involving lower-skilled workers will shift to developing countries . . .*¹⁴

A restriction on selected workers from abroad, which specifies that only those with arranged employment are admissible, came into effect May 1, 1982. As a result of the restriction, the selected worker intake dropped dramatically from 18,143 in 1982 to an estimated 7,000 in 1983.¹⁵

Overall, the number of immigrants permitted landing fell by twenty-seven percent from 121,147 in 1982 to 88,846 in 1983 (see Table 1). John Roberts, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, justified the restriction on immigrant workers on the grounds that

it was consistent with a “Canadians first” policy of protecting jobs for Canadian citizens and permanent residents, a policy that would likely obtain the support of Canadian wage earners and the labour movement.

Table 1. Immigration Landings and Temporary Employment Authorizations, Canada, Selected Years

YEAR	TOTAL IMMIGRATION LANDINGS	EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATIONS
1974	218,465	87,353
1978	86,313	83,497
1981	128,618	126,581
1982	121,147	125,911
1983	88,846	130,000

Source: Canada, Department of Employment and Immigration.

Far less publicized and less popular has been the move by the federal government to simultaneously *augment* the number of temporary visa migrants working in Canada in particular jobs for specified amounts of time ranging from a couple of months to a few years. In 1974, a peak year for immigration to Canada, the total number of immigrant landings was 2.5 times greater than the number of employment authorizations (or temporary workers). By 1978, the two categories had approximately equal numbers. But by 1983, the balance had shifted so that the number of temporary visa workers in Canada had increased slightly from the year before and now *exceeded* the number of immigrant landings by forty-six percent (see Table 1).

Discernible within these trends was a shift from “settler” to “contract” labour. The gate-keeper mechanism of the state immigration apparatus was used to provide employers with a flexible migrant labour force which could be recruited and expelled according to the demands of the capital accumulation momentum. The benefits which accrue to employers from the employment of “contract” or “guest” workers resides also in their weak *political* status, devoid of rights held by nominally free wage labour—to move freely in pursuit of the optimal conditions for the sale of their labour power, to bargain collectively, vote, and express dissent. The temporary visa system also benefits the state which can send unwelcome, unemployed “guests” back home rather than bear the costs of their unemployment through payment of unemployment insurance or welfare benefits.

The majority of workers on temporary employment visas during the 1980s were white: close to half were from the United States and approximately seven percent had passports from the United Kingdom. The third, fourth, and fifth largest sources for temporary visa workers were the predominantly non-white countries of Jamaica, India, and the Philippines; workers from these and other Third World countries are brought in to fill low-paid, undesirable, and unprotected jobs such as domestic service and seasonal agricultural work. The number of temporary visa workers from Jamaica has, since the late 1970s, overtaken the number of "settler" immigrants, and for India and the Philippines the numbers in the two categories were not markedly different by 1982 (see Table 2).

Table 2: (1) Canadian Immigration Landings & (2) Employment Authorizations: For Jamaica, India and the Philippines, 1978-1983.

YEAR	JAMAICA		INDIA		PHILIPPINES	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
1978	3858	5253	5110	1557	4370	484
1979	3456	5257	4730	1957	NA	774
1980	3161	5322	8483	2573	6051	1857
1981	2553	5420	8256	3924	5859	3450
1982	2593	5117	7776	5499	5062	4575
1983	NA	5265	NA	5244	NA	4373

Source: Canada, Department of Employment and Immigration

The closely supervised channelling of visible minority workers into contract labour jobs has fostered tensions and divisions among workers. Negative sentiment toward migrant workers was expressed at the 1981 Ontario Federation of Labour convention when the St. Thomas and District Labour Council unsuccessfully brought forward a resolution recommending a program to reduce the number of off-shore workers allowed into Canada. The preamble to the resolution read, "Whereas the off-shore workers rob the Canadian workers of jobs and chances for gainful employment in the seasonal vegetable, fruit and tobacco harvest."¹⁶

The development of a program to locate and deport "illegal aliens," initiated by the Immigration Department in the summer of 1982, is the clearest instance of coercive state regulation of migrant labour. The

high priority assigned by the Immigration Department to the tracking of unauthorized workers is reflected in the spending estimates for the program which were recently boosted by \$2 million to \$47 million. One can contrast the \$45 million increase to the \$3.1 million provided to *all* community organizations across Canada involved in immigrant assistance. These organizations received no increase in funding from the previous year, despite an expanded mandate for federally-financed immigrant assistance programs.¹⁷

The process through which the immigration department developed its program on illegal migrants offers a fascinatingly reflexive study of the legitimation, through recourse to “public opinion,” of increasingly coercive immigration practices with distinctly racist features. The ideological implications of this process clearly contradict the emergent anti-racist thrust of programs and discourses within other state institutions; yet they also connect with common-sense racist notions about the sources for economic and social decline. It is thus worthwhile to “deconstruct”¹⁸ the official report of the special investigation into the “problem” of illegal migrants in Canada. The method of deconstruction which scrutinizes the official claims made about illegal migrants, brings to light the role of immigration policy in heightening racial fears and tensions.

A process of consultation conducted by W.G. Robinson, the special advisor appointed by the Immigration Minister to investigate illegal migration, elicited close to 1000 letters and briefs. Most submissions articulated a popular view that scapegoated illegal migrants, identified them with non-white peoples, and defined them as a social problem—stealing jobs from whites, swelling unemployment levels, failing to pay taxes, and burdening welfare. Within his report, Robinson made some attempt to discredit the position that defined illegal migration as a problem of *major* proportions in Canada. He acknowledged that “the situation in Canada pales in comparison with that in many other countries throughout the world,”¹⁹ and proceeded to scale down the scope of the problem to a maximum estimate of 50,000 illegal migrants or one-quarter of the estimate made earlier by the Canadian Employment and Immigration Advisory Council.

In order to provide a focus for public discussion, the Special Advisor prepared an “Issues paper” (February, 1983) which referred to *one* study of *apprehended* aliens in the Toronto district, identifying among other statuses their nationalities. Most “were from Jamaica (28 percent), Guyana (16 percent), and Portugal (8 percent), *not counting those from the United States.*”²⁰ More than 15,000 copies of

the "Issues paper" were distributed: some were used as a basis for discussion in school classrooms, thus providing school children with "evidence" that the cheaters and transgressors of Canadian laws are commonly black, a view frequently conveyed within the mass media. The submissions received by the Advisor to the effect that the high rates of illegal migration among Jamaicans and Guyanese were attributable, in part, to increased enforcement against visible minorities were dismissed by him on the grounds that "we have received no evidence to support such an allegation."²¹

Public consultation was thus used to dispel allegations of racism in immigration procedures. But more important, it confirmed the view that illegal migration was a problem of public concern inasmuch as such anomalies threatened "the *integrity* of our immigration system,"²² which "could be characterized as *generous and open* and one which has *served us well*."²³ Abuses linked to the restrictive and increasingly coercive policy reflecting the historical preferences for "assimilable," white immigrants, and guided by the labour and foreign investment concerns of corporations found no place in the Special Advisor's analysis. Instead, the problem was defined as one of exploitation by black "aliens" of an insecure, underemployed and mostly white domestic population and an impartial and even generous immigration system.

At one point in the report, Robinson acknowledged that because of "lack of political will," employers are infrequently prosecuted or convicted for hiring illegal migrants. The recommended solution to this problem is to "*measure* the effectiveness of *existing* employer sanctions," rather than impose more effective penalties.²⁴ The interests of capital are thus discursively dealt with, yet are not seen to comprise a structural feature of the reproduction of the system of cheap, illegal migrant labour. In this way, Robinson's report is typical of official discourse whose role Burton and Carlen describe as that of seeking "to redeem legitimacy crises by the confrontation and appropriation of unofficial versions of discreditable episodes. To render this other immaterial, the textual formation attempts to discursively appropriate non-official readings."²⁵

The official portrayal of the threat posed by illegal immigrants resonates with similar common-sense beliefs held by many Canadians. Scores of surveys conducted since the mid-1970s have documented the presence of anti-immigrant and racist sentiments among the majority (or a significant minority) of Canadians.²⁶ In an analysis of a national survey of Canadians conducted in 1977, Filson found

that sixty percent of working class respondents believed that Canada admitted too many immigrants from India and Pakistan, and forty percent expressed this negative sentiment about West Indian immigrants.²⁷ A March, 1982, Gallup Poll commissioned by then Minister of Multiculturalism, James Fleming, revealed that twelve percent of respondents were opposed altogether to non-white immigration, and thirty-one percent said they "would support organizations that worked toward preserving Canada for whites only."²⁸

The official legitimation provided to the definition of the unseen illegal presence as the "enemy within," which needed to be rigorously routed out of the fabric of Canadian society, touched the nerve of a common sense racist understanding. In so doing, it provided justification for an attack on the rights and civil liberties of visitors, immigrants, and Canadian residents simply because they were black and suspected of being "aliens." The program to control illegal migration involves the imposition of new measures to aid border control, including visa requirements for all countries except the United States, landing cards for non-Canadians on incoming flights to Canada, and referral for secondary examination and subsequent monitoring of entire flights of non-Canadians.²⁹ Predictably, the first planeload of visitors to Canada subjected to the pilot project of lengthy secondary examination and subsequent monitoring consisted of black Jamaicans who saw incoming white passengers file by without official query or subsequent surveillance.

The recent aggressive attempts to locate and deport "aliens" working without legal status in Canada form part of the litany of Canadian immigration regulations and policies which are non-discriminatory in appearance, yet in fact are designed to ensure that Canada's gates remain shut for all but a trickle of poor, low-skilled migrants from colonized, "non-traditional" sources.³⁰ The new measures for policing the borders and the new emphasis on temporary contract migration represent attempts by the immigration department to mediate the interests of business firms in reducing foreign labour reserves during a period of recession. They also reflect the state's interests in limiting the maintenance costs of surplus labour and encouraging the settlement in Canada of skilled, "assimilable" immigrants. Public consultation, a new provision in immigration planning, justified the intensified efforts on the part of immigration authorities to control, monitor, and exclude entry of non-white migrants through reference to an increasingly intolerant climate of public opinion. The terms of dialogue with "the public" in the process of immigration planning thus reinforce the popular definition of the

growing crisis in the economy and social services which shifts the focus of blame onto recent visible minority immigrants and illegal immigrants. The public legitimization of racist sentiment fostered by the recent developments in immigration policy forms part of the “problem of racism” which federal multicultural policy has begun to address.

Multiculturalism and the Anti-Racist Agenda of the Federal Government

The federal policy of multiculturalism has existed for over a dozen years; it has formed the “new orthodoxy” among researchers of Canadian ethnicity who accept its existence as a form of representation won by the non-English, non-French groups. Yet scholars also delight in directing barbs at the policy’s failure to live up to its goals—ethnocultural retention and sharing, and the overcoming of cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society.³¹

The policy of multiculturalism and its administrative apparatus, the Multiculturalism Directorate, are easy targets for criticism. The policy’s lowly status is symbolized by a junior Minister of State who, unlike most ministers, does not preside over a separate ministry or department. The subordinate structural position of the federal multiculturalism bureaucracy is captured in departmental charts which portray the minister of state “floating like a loosely connected dirigible to one side of the secretary of state while the directorate is well hidden beneath the undersecretary of state, five assistant undersecretaries and layers of other bureaucrats.”³² The low priority assigned to multiculturalism by the Treasury Board is also signified by the modest sums allocated to the program—approximately sixteen million dollars for the 1983-1984 budget, or what amounts to 64¢ per capita. This sum can be contrasted to the forty-seven million dollars allocated to the tracking and deportation of illegal migrants.

One of the central contradictions inherent in the multicultural ideology pertains to the role of ethnic minority cultural traditions, loyalties, and languages within a societal framework governed both by capitalist social relations and Anglo-Saxon and French-Canadian norms. In the policy, “cultural differences are at once extolled and considered a hindrance to be removed in the interests of equal opportunity.”³³ The appeal of multiculturalism resides within its apparently contradictory claim to provide ethnic minorities with both cultural and linguistic rights *and* the means to escape the stigma of ethnicity and pass into the mainstream.³⁴ The recent “national program to

combat racism,” centered within the Multiculturalism Directorate, extends the Canadian state’s claim to be a multiethnic democracy explicitly to visible minorities.

Until recently, questions of racism and the special disadvantages faced by visible minorities were addressed within the Multiculturalism Directorate in a cryptic fashion, e.g., the “elimination of cross-cultural misunderstandings.” In 1981, the federal government announced that it would initiate a national anti-racist program; \$1.7 million was earmarked for race relations and a Race Relations Unit was established within the Multiculturalism Directorate. The new Race Relations Unit subsidized research to determine the nature and extent of racism in Canada, and initiated a public educational campaign to “inform and correct misinformation about minority groups and their contributions to Canadian society.”³⁵

Two factors were principal catalysts for these developments. The first was the anticipation of a federal election to be held some time in 1984 and the perceived need to engage in a high-profile activity which would gain Liberal votes from the visible minority electorate. The second was the commitment by the Minister of Multiculturalism, James Fleming, to address a potentially explosive race relations situation in Canada. The results of a March, 1982, Gallup Poll commissioned by Fleming, reporting that thirty-one percent of Canadians “would support organizations that worked toward preserving Canada for whites only,” provided confirmation for such official anxieties.

By May of 1983, the focus of the federal government’s anti-racist campaign had moved to Parliament where a special “Parliamentary Committee on Racism” was established and subsequently renamed the “Special Committee on Participation of Visible Minorities in Canadian Society.” Seven members of Parliament were appointed to sit on the Parliamentary Task Force—three Liberals, three Progressive Conservatives, and one member of the New Democratic Party. The fact that all seven members were white males drew severe criticism from visible minority organizations. The criticisms were well-founded in a sense that the all-white committee consistently manifested a lack of understanding of the fundamental manner in which the experiences of visible minorities are mediated by colour or “visibility” and the oppression that brings. One Committee member, the former Minister for Multiculturalism during Clark’s short-lived Progressive Conservation administration, responded to the criticism by defining the term inclusively to incorporate white, European

groups: "How about Paproski? I am visible. What about our Greek friend here Gus Mitges? How about Laverne Lewycky? How visible do you want us to be? ... You know 30 or 35 or even 40 years ago we were visible minorities at that time."³⁶

During a one-month period in September and October, 1983, the Commons Committee engaged in a process of consultation with the public. It received approximately 300 briefs and met with 130 race relations, immigrant service, visible minority, and other community groups in Ottawa and nine other cities across the country. The "orders of reference" for the committee's work had been expunged of the crisis tone taken by Fleming and sought "to identify and investigate examples or models of the promotion of harmonious relations between visible minority Canadians and other Canadians particularly in institutional areas." In its final report, tabled in the House of Commons on March 28, 1984, the Committee acknowledged its disappointment that more "positive models" had not been forthcoming during the process of consultation and investigation. The Committee's "optimistic" mandate had been repeatedly criticized during the hearings which began with the hyperbolic warning from the President of the Sikh Federation that "a hurricane of racism" was sweeping the country. A member of the National Capital Alliance on Race Relations perceived the Committee's mandate as counselling witnesses to "look for flowers in a bull pen."³⁷

The Committee's final report was named *Equality Now!* It conveys the image that "Canada has, when compared with other countries, an enviable record in the area of race relations, [but one that is] flawed."³⁸ The eighty recommendations contained in the report and grouped under six headings—social integration, employment, public policy, justice, media, and education—are presented as a "blueprint . . . to promote racial harmony in a country that increasingly is becoming multiracial." Notwithstanding the diversity of its recommendations and the jurisdictions to which they are addressed, *Equality Now!* reflects two central, related concerns. The first is a desire to preempt the development of a form of race relations that had disrupted the "harmony" of other countries such as Britain and the United States. That is, "The federal government must quickly take decisive action to prevent a potentially serious race relations problem from developing."³⁹ After releasing the report, the Committee's Chairperson, Bob Daudlin, stated, "There is a substantial amount of frustration out there. Lord knows they have reason to be activist."⁴⁰

The second concern is the perceived need to provide *symbolic*

recognition to visible minorities as a growing social and electoral force within Canadian society:

It is difficult to overestimate the symbolic importance of political institutions in a society. The legitimacy of government action and public policy depend upon the credibility of the institutions which administer them. Clearly, if Parliament, government departments, agencies and organizations are to maintain their credibility, they must adequately reflect the nature of the society in which they are based.⁴¹

The sheer number of recommendations contained in the report conveys the impression that a thorough overhaul of societal structures is warranted and promoted. This illusion is soon undercut by the weakness of most recommended reforms, the listing as “recommendations” of ongoing programs and processes, and that many of the recommendations (e.g., pertaining to the media and education) are outside the federal government’s jurisdiction and capability for direct influence. Expression is also given to the need for *mutual* accommodation, the need for change not only in Canadian institutions but also in the behaviours of the visible minorities which evoke negative responses from white Canadians.

The recommendation that affirmative action programs for visible minorities be implemented—possibly the most contentious in the report—urges that private sector employers be gently coaxed with tax incentives and available subsidies to *voluntarily* hire more non-white workers, at least for the first five years. The voluntary route is recommended even though the report acknowledges the dismal failure of voluntary affirmative action programs to evoke support from employers.⁴²

The gradual and incremental process of institutional reform envisaged in *Equality Now!* reflects an appreciation of the current framework of economic stagnation and fiscal restraint. For instance, the recommendation to increase the participation of visible minorities on federal boards and commissions was prefaced with the following statement:

Given the current restraints on hiring in the federal public service and the well-documented barriers to advancement which members of all disadvantaged groups along with their majority colleagues already employed in the public service presently are encountering, Governor-in-General appointments would appear to be one of the most promising areas in which the federal government could easily and decisively demonstrate a leadership role with respect to the participation of visible minorities in the public sector in the immediate future.⁴³

The chief significance of *Equality Now!* is the envisaged change in the *symbolic* rather than material condition of visible minorities and the incorporation of these groups into a harmonious framework of

“multiculturalism within a bilingual setting.” The report reflects an official recognition for the need to alter public rhetoric to better accord with the shifting demographic bases of Canadian society:

Inherent in the notion of the diversity of Canadian society as a mosaic is the equal participation of the pieces making it up, yet Canadian society is in reality a “vertical mosaic,” with some pieces raised above the others; the surface is uneven. The groups who appeared before the Committee were in agreement with two official languages. However, they were not in agreement with the pervasive acceptance in Canada that there be two official cultures. *As long as we persist with the rhetoric of two founding peoples, and their implied greater importance, Canadians whose heritage is other than French or English will be denied recognition as equals in the development of Canada, will be denied a sense of belonging and will be considered and will consider themselves lesser mortals.*”⁴⁴

The site for the representation of ethnic minorities, the Multiculturalism Directorate, has played a peripheral role in organizing the material conditions for the existence of Canada’s ethnic minority groups. It has, however, played a central role in establishing the “official reality” of these groups. One key feature running through the inquiry proceedings was the attention paid to state multiculturalism by *both* Committee members and members of community organizations as an institution for the representation of visible minorities and as a vehicle for combatting racism.

Community organizations repeatedly urged the Committee to recommend the upgrading of the status, resources, and autonomy of the Multiculturalism Directorate and to make it more responsive to visible minority groups. The Committee’s receptiveness to these “constructive” suggestions was reflected in a set of policy recommendations aimed at strengthening the multicultural state apparatus through the creation of a full-fledged Ministry of Multiculturalism, and the development of a Canadian Multicultural Advisory Council.

One consequence of the Parliamentary Committee on Visible Minorities’ Inquiry has been to channel the process of policy formation on structural issues of racism into non-threatening agencies which emphasize *cultural* contributions or transformations. This process has deflected attention from policies such as immigration and policing which play a more significant role in structuring race relations through their influence over the economic and political incorporation of visible minority immigrants into Canadian society. Visible minority groups urged and supported the upgrading of multiculturalism as a strategy for combatting racism; this reflects their own experience whereby the symbolic confirmation of “ethnic concerns” has largely been confined to multicultural agencies. Secondly, the ambiguity of the multicultural ideology has made it an attractive

concept through which non-dominant groups can lay claim to state resources, and state authorities can voice the interests and aspirations of non-dominant ethnic groups and simultaneously neutralize the potential antagonism of their demands. Finally, the emphasis placed on strengthened representation for visible minorities within multicultural apparatuses reflects the opaqueness and inaccessibility of other areas of state decision-making (immigration, police institutions) where the exercise of discretionary power has wielded a particularly potent influence on the lives of visible minority individuals.

The possibility that the recommendations made in *Equality Now!* would lead to a “ghettoization” of all issues related to combatting racism within the Department of Multiculturalism was raised as a concern by the authors of the Report. To avert the “ghettoization” syndrome, the Report recommends that “the new department’s mandate include a clear designation as the ‘lead’ ministry, responsible for the coordination of related policy issues emanating from other departments.”⁴⁵ The implications for minority groups is that the fight for racial equality will not be advanced by a shift towards a more reformist public discourse articulated by low-status institutions, unless struggles and negotiations are simultaneously centered on several strategic political terrains.

Conclusion

The recent development of official race relations policies in Canada does not conform to a linear conceptualization of the advanced capitalist state whereby “welfare” institutions and social services are shed in accordance with the restructuring of capital in a period of crisis. An integrative discourse legitimizing the anti-racist concerns of visible minorities has emerged within a variety of institutions within the Canadian state apparatus and minority struggles have been successful in instituting anti-racist safeguards in particular institutions and particular venues. The parameters of such reforms are established by the present climate of economic decline and the fiscal crisis of the state. Extensive reforms have also been hindered by the resistance of established, white wage earners to a further deterioration in their own living standards and by the resurgence of popular racism. *These latter factors prevent anti-racist interventions from developing into broadly-based “popular-democratic” movements or posing a challenge to the interests of business and conservative forces.*

The material and symbolic concessions won by visible minority

groups, however, cannot be ignored; they support the view that the state is not a pre-given or linear instrument for racial (class or gender) oppression but offers a variety of access points which are to a variable extent responsive to concerted pressure. The potentially disruptive character of racial tensions, the organizational and electoral pressures of visible minorities, and the presence of reformist officials receptive to democratizing pressures are some of the major factors predisposing the development of new anti-racist initiatives.

The resistance to democratization within “repressive” institutions and those directly involved in organizing conditions for accumulation (policing, immigration) confirm the idealism of a view which regards state structures as unproblematically open to infusions of democratic, anti-racist practices. The obverse side to the emergent, race-conscious ameliorative interventions by multicultural and other state institutions is an increasingly restrictionist immigration policy; its efforts to rationalize immigration flows in accordance with the labour requirements of capital have had detrimental consequences for visible minority communities in Canada.

Minority groups and those concerned with fostering conditions for racial *equality* (and not simply *harmony*) are faced with an important dilemma and a challenge. Those institutions which are most readily receptive to the development of countervailing networks of democratic communication and mobilization are located at the margins of state power, and are incapable of altering the popular and structural bases of racism. Such institutions can, nonetheless, play an important symbolic role in legitimating minority claims to resources and legislative protections. In contrast, those institutions which have a real and discernible material impact in defining and shaping the nature of racial subordination and exploitation of immigrant and minority groups (e.g., immigration, policing) are least accessible to minority interests. If there is to be significant transformation in the exploitative form of race relations in Canada, it is these latter institutions which must become the focal point of anti-racist democratizing strategies to modify the relations of forces within the state.

Notes

¹Sally Weaver. *Making Canadian Indian Policy*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

²In 1979, the "visible minority" population was estimated to comprise between 12 and 20 percent of the residents of the City of Toronto. These estimates were made in a study prepared for the City of Toronto for the purpose of developing an affirmative action program among city employees. Included are from 200,000 to 230,000 Blacks, 100,000 South Asians, 100,000 to 150,000 Chinese and 25,000 Natives. City of Toronto. "Equal Opportunity Employment Utilization Study." (Toronto, 1981).

³"Cardinal Carter faces decades-old tension." *Toronto Star*. (September 9, 1979).

⁴Claus Offe. "The Separation of Form and Content in Liberal Democracy." *Studies in Political Economy*. No. 3 (Spring, 1980); Nicos Poulantzas. *State Power Socialism*. (London: NLB and Verso, 1980).

⁵Rianne Mahon. "Canadian Public Policy: The Unequal Structure of Representation." *The Canadian State*. L.Panitch, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

⁶Martin Loney. "A Political Economy of Citizen Participation." *The Canadian State*. L. Panitch, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); Daiva Stasiulis. "The Political Structuring of Ethnic Community Action: A Reformulation." *Canadian Ethnic Studies*. Vol. 12, No. 3 (1980) 19-44.

⁷Offe, 13.

⁸Poulantzas, 215.

⁹F. Frobel, J. Heinrichs, and O. Kreye. *The New International Division of Labour*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

¹⁰In 1976, the International Labour Organization estimated the size of unemployment in the Third World at seventy-five million. Stuckey and Fay contend that this figure is in all probability an underestimate. Official estimates are low because of government interest in minimizing unemployment. Thus, "in India the 1961 census of the greater Bombay area lists as 'employed' workers all persons who had engaged in paid activity for at least one day during the 15 days before the census. This produces a remarkable figure—only 5% unemployed." Barbara Stuckey and Margaret A. Fay, "Rural Subsistence, Migration, and Urbanization: The Production, Destruction, and Reproduction of Cheap Labour in the World Market Economy." *Antipode*. Vol. 13, No. 2 (1981) 9-10.

¹¹Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison. *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment and the Dismantling of Basic Industry*. (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

¹²Leon Muszynski and Jeffrey Reitz. "Racial and Ethnic Discrimination in Employment." *Working Paper #5* (Toronto: Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, 1981) 23.

¹³"Selected workers are defined as principal applicants in the independent categories, including entrepreneurs, self-employed persons and retirees. They are immigrants who are selected for their labour market skills when Canadians are unavailable or cannot be trained in a timely way. Other immigrants are referred to as 'non-selected workers' if they have indicated an intention to work in Canada. These other immigrants could be members of the family class, refugees, members of the designated classes, entrepreneurs, self-employed persons or the spouses and dependents of selected workers." Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission. "Background paper on future immigration levels." (1983) 43.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶The resolutions committee recommended non-concurrence on several grounds including its perception that the resolution is "somewhat racial." Their recommendation of non-concurrence was recorded as having been "carried overwhelmingly" in the voting on the convention floor.

¹⁷Ann Silversides. "Aid to immigrants is cut." *Globe and Mail* (May 26, 1984) 19.

¹⁸"Deconstruction" is defined by Burton and Carlen as "a reading that re-opens and denies the authorial claims of official discourse, a reading that refuses the conflation of the order of the discursive into the order of the non-discursive." Frank Burton and Pat Carlen. *Official Discourse*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979) 14.

¹⁹W.G. Robinson. "Illegal Migrants in Canada." *A Report to the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Employment and Immigration*. (Ottawa, 1983).

²⁰*Ibid.*, 5, emphasis my own.

²¹*Ibid.*, 83.

²²*Ibid.*, xviii, emphasis my own.

²³*Ibid.*, 29, emphasis my own.

²⁴*Ibid.*, xxviii-xxix, emphasis my own.

²⁵Burton and Carlen, 44.

²⁶John Berry, Rudolf Kalin and Donald Taylor. *Multiculturalism and Ethnic Attitudes in Canada*. (Ottawa, 1976); Raymond Breton. "The Ethnic Community as a Resource in Relation to Group Problems: Perceptions and Attitudes." *Research Paper No. 122*. (Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, May 1981); Glen Filson. "Class and Ethnic Differences in Canadians' Attitudes to Native People's Rights and Immigration." *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*. Vol. 20, No. 4 (1983); Frances Henry. "The Dynamics of Racism in Toronto." (Department of Anthropology, York University: Mimeo, 1977); Canada, Minister of State, Multiculturalism. "Race Relations and the Law." *Report of a Symposium held in Vancouver*. (Vancouver: April 22-24, 1982).

²⁷Filson, 465.

²⁸Canada, Minister of State, Multiculturalism, 12.

²⁹Robinson, 56.

³⁰The distribution of immigration offices and proportion of the budget in staffing them clearly indicates the historical preference for white European immigration. The discriminatory nature of selection mechanisms is also evident in the considerably longer processing time for family class applicants in underdeveloped in comparison with developed countries. In 1982, the *mean* processing time for family class applicants in New Delhi was three times that for London (345 and 104 days, respectively). Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission. "Background paper on future immigration levels." (Ottawa, November 1, 1983) 31, Table 8.

³¹Manoly Lupul. "The Political Implementation of Multiculturalism." *Journal of Canadian Studies*. Vol. 17, No. 1 (1982) 93-102; Kogila Moodley. "Canadian multiculturalism as ideology." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Vol. 16, No. 3 (1983) 320-331; Karl Peter. "The Myth of Multiculturalism and Other Political Fables." *Ethnicity, Power and Politics in Canada*. J. Dahlie and T. Fernando, eds. (Toronto: Metheun, 1981).

³²Lupul, 95.

³³Moodley, 320. "Trudeau, in introducing the policy, speaks of providing assistance to 'all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society,' and in the same breath, speaks of the value of cultural heritage retention" (House of Commons Debates, October 8, 1971, p. 8545).

³⁴The image that Canada is not merely a liberal democracy, but one supportive of the cultural rights of a multi-ethnic populace is codified in Section 27 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms which states: "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canada."

³⁵Canada, Minister of State, Multiculturalism.

³⁶Steve Paproski. Special Parliamentary Committee on Visible Minorities in Canadian Society (heretofore SPCVM). *Minutes*. (Ottawa, October 4, 1983). At several points, the non-Anglo "ethnic members" of the Committee made reference to the discrimination and suffering white Europeans had been subjected to in the past. The clear implication of such remarks was that the discrimination experienced by visible minority immigrants would disappear, as it had for earlier groups of immigrants, through a process of ethnic succession, or in the words of the Committee's Chair, Bob Daudlin, "Your turn is coming—the next 30 years."

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸SPCVM, *Equality Now!*, 2-3.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁰Charlotte Montgomery, "MPs urge Ottawa to press for hiring of more non-whites." *Globe and Mail*. (March 29, 1984) 2.

⁴¹SPCVM, *Equality Now!*, 50.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 35. "The Affirmative Action Branch of the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission has encouraged and assisted the private sector to develop programs targeted at women, the disabled, aboriginal people and Blacks in Nova Scotia on a voluntary basis. From 1979 to 1983, 1130 firms were approached, but as of November 1983, only 49 companies throughout the country had signed agreements to establish formal affirmative action programs."

⁴³*Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 56.

Critique

Stasiulis's two-part essay offers a critique of the policies on immigration and racism pursued by the Canadian government during the past decade or so. While the government's multicultural institutions seek to ameliorate racism, its immigration agencies get blamed for intensifying the problem. The latter agencies are better supported than the former which are on the "fringes of state power," and, according to the author, have little chance of changing immigration policies.

The first part of the essay argues that since the early 1980s the Canadian government has tried to control and maintain a flexible